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Seven out of ten young children attend preschool or a preschool program

In June 2008, seven out of ten (72%) of children aged 3-6 years who were not attending school were usually attending a preschool or a preschool program in long day care, according to new findings from the ABS Childhood Education and Care Survey (CEaCS). CEaCS also found that 82% of school children aged 4-8 years had attended a preschool program in the year before commencing school.

CEaCS is the first national survey to measure attendance in preschool programs in both preschools and long day care centres.

Of all children aged 3-6 years who usually attended a preschool, 23% attended for the 'benchmark' 15 hours or more per week, although children attending for 10 to 14 hours per week was more common (47%).

CEaCS also found that 43% (1.5 million) of all children aged 0-12 years attended child care - with 22% of these children attending formal care, and 29% using informal care.

In 2008 grandparents were caring for 19% of the children aged 0-12 years, with the next most common type of care being long day care (12%).

Parents of 75% of children aged 0-12 years who usually attended formal care reported work related reasons for their children's attendance in formal care, with 29% believing that this care was beneficial for the child. Parents of 58% of children aged 0-12 years using informal care reported work related reasons, followed by personal reasons (31%), which included giving parents a break, time alone, or time to care for other relatives; as well as allowing parents to study or undertake sport and other recreational activities.

Parents of 126,000 children reported that they either wanted to place their children in child care or preschool, or access additional or different types of care or preschool to current arrangements. Of these parents, 32% applied for new or additional care or preschool enrolment.

Attendance in formal child care has risen from 17% of children aged 0-11 years in 1999 to 22% in 2008, while usage of informal care fell from 37% to 34% over the same period.

In June 2008 41% of employed male parents reported that they used a range of work arrangements to facilitate caring for their children aged 0-11 years, up from 27% in 1999. The most common type of work arrangement used by either parent to facilitate caring for their children was flexible working hours, with 30% of employed fathers utilising flexible working hours, and 42% of employed mothers. Part-time work was the most common arrangement (42%) used by employed mothers to care for their children compared to 5% of employed fathers working part time for this purpose. Overall, 74% of employed female parents used some form of work arrangement to facilitate care for their children.

Further information is available in *Childhood Education and Care, Australia, June 2008*, (cat. no. 4402.0).

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